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...ing his *Aeneid* to Augustus  
and Octavia.

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PRIZE POEM

RECITED IN  
THEATRE, OXFORD,  
JUNE 13, 1866,

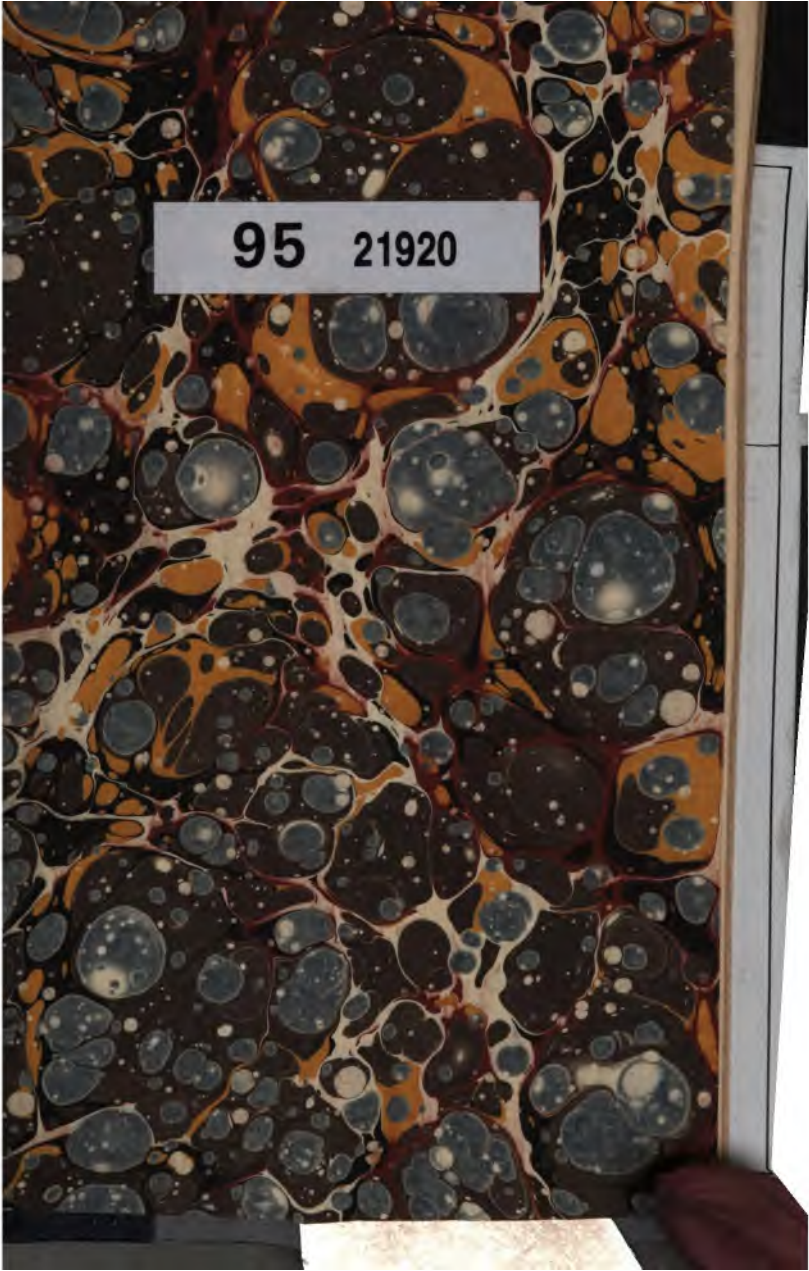
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GEORGE YELD,  
SCHOLAR OF BRASENOSE COLLEGE.



Oxford:  
AND G. SHRIMPTON.  
1866.

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The image shows the front cover of a book. The cover is decorated with a traditional marbled paper pattern, often called a 'stone' or 'shell' pattern. This pattern consists of large, irregular, cell-like shapes in shades of dark brown, black, and cream, with smaller speckles of blue and orange scattered throughout. A small, rectangular white paper label is affixed to the upper left portion of the cover. On this label, the number '95' is printed in a large, bold, black sans-serif font, followed by the number '21920' in a slightly smaller, regular weight of the same font. The book is positioned vertically, and the right edge of the image shows the inner hinge and the edges of the book's pages, which appear to be a light, off-white color. The overall lighting is even, highlighting the texture of the marbled paper.

**95** 21920



Virgil reading his *Aeneid* to Augustus  
and Octavia.

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A PRIZE POEM

RECITED IN

THE THEATRE, OXFORD,

*JUNE* 13, 1866,

BY

GEORGE YELD,

SCHOLAR OF BRASENOSE COLLEGE.



Oxford:

T. AND G. SHRIMPTON.

1866.





Virgil reading his *Aeneid* to Augustus  
and Octavia.

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**E**VENING came on, and stiller grew the world,  
In pleasant cool, and tender twilight curled :  
Clear was the sky, save where between the pines  
One light cloud moved along the Apennines.  
In such soft calm the poet sweetest sings,  
And maiden fingers touch the cithern's strings :  
Perchance in Helicon's wind-haunted bower  
The nine Immortals at this charmed hour  
Sang their first anthem, while the green earth round  
Burst into bud and blossom at the sound.

Softly in Cæsar's gardens woke the breeze,  
With low-tongued whispers stirring in the trees ;  
Now laughing sweetly, now, with passion worn,  
Lisping sad syllables of a Naiad's scorn.  
Now skimming lightly o'er flushed waves of bloom,  
Now wafting every way the rich perfume :



While, bright as starlight in the cloudless blue,  
Sonorous fountains shed their freshening dew.  
Hither, with furrowed brow and piercing eye,  
Augustus, ruler of the world, drew nigh :  
Octavia followed, worn with grief, and pale  
As one lone snowdrop in a wintry vale :  
Then came the poet, gazing on the west,  
And haply musing on Elysian rest.  
There sat they in a circle, where the choir  
That touch men's spirits with poetic fire  
Stood up, and round their limbs a rose had grown,  
And fed their lips with fragrance night and noon.  
As by a charm the breeze was lulled to sleep,  
A sudden silence seemed o'er all to creep,  
And stilled the rustling leaves, and hushed the fountain's  
    leap.

Then told the master how the battle's roar  
Through many seasons raged on Phrygia's shore,  
Till Greeks no longer could endure the toil,  
And dauntless valour yielded place to guile.  
Nor left he fierce Minerva's wrath unsung,  
Nor dark Ulysses' craft, nor Sinon's lying tongue.  
The mighty horse, Laocoön's dreadful doom,  
Shrouded the story in still deeper gloom :

The cunning tale Troy's sons believed too well—  
The horse was dragged within the citadel ;  
And the sun 'parted, ne'er to shine again  
On Ilium's glories and old Priam's reign.  
—Suddenly rose thick tongues of roaring fire—  
Fate's hand had lit that city's funeral pyre :  
Followed the rush of feet, the thunderous crash  
Of battlements, swords' ring, and armour's clash,  
Deep curse of men, and women's piercing cry,  
A people's last long wail of utter agony.

Three princes only were untouched by fate,  
—Their kinsmen slain, their country desolate—  
Who found a refuge under Ida's side,  
Where close-grown trees the sunless caverns hide.

He changed the scene : hark ! mournfully love-lorn  
The Tyrian lady weepeth to the morn,  
And, pale with watching, tells to sister ears  
The false, false cause of all her grief and tears.  
Ah, cruel Venus ! faithless as the sea,  
That weavest subtle net of treachery !  
Ah merciless ! that slayest with a smile  
The heart that dreameth not thou canst beguile ;  
Fierce as a kite pursuing tender dove,  
Thou, cruel goddess, slayest men with love.

He hurried quickly o'er the queen's great shame,  
And dark dishonouring of honoured name.  
What mortal e'er, through time, stood up and strove  
With two immortals of the race of Jove?  
Her eyes were full of love, her heart of fire,  
And bitter poison of intense desire :  
In vain she tried to quench the deadly flame,  
Dark passion trampled on the neck of shame.  
She fell : her faithless guest across the foam  
Steered for the country that should be his home.

Here paused the poet : for another's woe  
What woman's tears will not unbidden flow?  
Octavia's eyes with tender dew were pearled,  
And pity moved the ruler of the world.

Then told he of the Sibyl's holy cave,  
Where awful oracles Apollo gave ;  
And how Æneas reached that fated land,  
And how, obedient to the god's command,  
Sibyl and hero left the heaven's pure breath  
And trod the cold and hated way to death.

Downwards they pass,—downwards,—dread way and  
drear,  
Alike by gods and mortals held in fear,

Unlit by evening's star, or morn's red gleam,  
Dim, shadowy, awful, as a nameless dream  
Which the pale dreamer's tongue may never tell,  
So heavy on his heart lies terror's spell.  
—Past the dark dwelling-place of pain and care,  
And sleep, and death, and misery, and despair,—  
Till they reach piteous crowds who wailing stood  
In cold and darkness by the Stygian flood,  
Countless as wind-heaped leaves in damp autumnal  
wood :

Matrons, and chiefs, and fair-faced youths erewhile  
Untimely laid upon the funeral pile,  
Great-hearted warriors smitten in the van  
Of battle, maiden lips unknissed of man.—  
Thence borne across in creaking bark, they gain  
A labyrinthine path through Pluto's reign.  
Here in a forest deep—sad-fated queen !—  
Pale from the touch of death, is Dido seen,  
As when the moon, her fair face marred with pain,  
Looks feebly forth between the clouds and rain.  
Her, while his heart is filled with tender ruth,  
With words of love Æneas strives to soothe ;  
But all in vain he strives, in vain are tears—  
No word of love, no pitying voice she hears,  
But stands before him motionless and cold  
As some white rock which frozen snows enfold :

At last slow sense returns, soft thoughts arise ;  
To seek Sychæus through the gloom she flies.

Here the great master paused, and faint sweet gales  
Filled up the pause with gently-murmured tales,  
And then again the solemn stream of song  
Like a majestic river flowed along.

Here are the chosen dwellings of the blest :  
Cool leafy groves, and little forests dressed  
In greenest drapery, retirèd glade  
Fanned by soft winds, and sunny slope o'erlaid  
With daintiest broidery of leaves and flowers,  
The chosen favourites of the kindly hours.  
Here is more bounteous ether, purer light,  
And glistening plains that dazzle mortal sight ;  
And sun and moon alternate set and rise  
In the blue calmness of the cloudless skies.  
Here are the happy : some lock arm and hand  
To wrestle, on the turf, or yellow sand :  
Some pipe sweet music : others quickly glance  
Through mazy circles of the merry dance,  
While Orpheus swiftly strikes his charmèd lyre  
And fills with rapture all the eager choir.  
Here they behold the fairest sons of Troy,  
Thrice happy spirits born in years of joy :

Spear, shield, and sword, lie bloodless on the meads,  
Beside them graze a herd of noble steeds ;  
Whatever dearest joy each loved to gain  
On earth, he follows on the Elysian plain.  
Here is a youthful band, their limbs outspread,  
Carelessly feasting on the turf's green bed,  
With fragrant bays to shade them, while on high  
Ofttimes their pæan rises joyfully.  
Here are Apollo's chosen : priest, and seer,  
And prophet, every one a holy peer,  
Whose songs are pure from shame as the white crowns  
they wear.

Hence passing onward, by Musæus led,  
They reach a gentle ridge ;—below lie spread  
Meads ancle-deep in bloom, and sunny gleams  
Of herbage, nurtured by untainted streams.  
Thither descending to the pleasant shade,  
They find Anchises in a quiet glade :  
All round green leaves are bursting, and a spring  
Creeps through the moss with tempered murmuring.  
The father telleth o'er with thoughtful care  
The count of all his sons, whose souls shall fare  
To breathe the pleasant breath of earth's pure clime  
In the long cycles of the after-time.  
Then, looking up, beholds his son now near,  
And greets him mournfully with many a tear.

Then, their sad meeting o'er, the Trojan's gaze  
Wanders o'er grove and vale in deep amaze :  
Here are still woods, and shades from trouble free,  
With Lethe's river flowing solemnly ;  
Peoples and nations flit around the shore  
Whose numbers human lips might ne'er tell o'er,  
Countless as bees upon a dewy lawn  
At the fresh breaking of a summer dawn,  
When each quick spoiler to a lily clings,  
And all the plain is murmurous with wings.  
Then tells the father how each spirit wins  
By years of pain a sweet release from sins,  
Puts off each taint of shame and stain of woe,  
And seeks Elysium pure as fresh-fall'n snow,  
Then drinks of Lethe, and to earth is borne,  
And wakes once more in childhood's earliest morn.

Now from a mound he points, and tells the name  
Of Rome's most noble heritors of fame :  
Numa, and Decius, and the mighty hand  
That reaped red harvest upon Zama's sand,—  
Chiefest of all Augustus,—at whose throne  
Earth's myriad children bow in silence down.  
Through Latian realms by Saturn ruled of yore  
The golden years of peace flow on once more :

Far past the land where Atlas lifts the sky  
Barbarian monarchs own his majesty;  
Far past the eastern pathway of the sun  
His word is uttered, and his will is done ;—  
Distance so vast no wanderer ever trod,  
No step of man, nor sandaled foot of god.

Be it for other hands to flush with breath  
White lips of Parian marble cold as death ;  
Another's hand may touch the languid lyre ;  
Another's heart enshrine the Muse's fire ;  
Another's gaze may pierce the star-specked shroud  
That hides the queen moon in her realms of cloud ;  
Another's patient care may haply find  
What signs foretell the wrath of wave and wind ;  
Another's voice may plead the captive's cause  
Or win the awe-struck multitude's applause ;  
Roman ! be thine to rule the battle's tide,  
The vanquished spare, crush out the haughty's pride,  
And crown the world with peace as lilies crown a bride.

Again the father speaks : “ Behold the man  
Who ever fighteth in the battle's van,  
Marcellus, laden with the spoil of kings,  
Feretrian Jove's appointed offerings.”



To whom his son : "Is that his child, whose face  
Is flushed with valour's fire and virtue's grace,  
But round his brow night folds her shadowy wing,  
Cold as a frozen violet of spring?"  
And yet again the father, dim with tears :  
"Ask not the sorrow of the after years :  
Him with short length of days the Fates endow,  
Small space of life their stern decrees allow,  
Else Roman majesty on earth and sea  
Had moved the gods to bitter jealousy.  
Behold Rome's dearest hope, her chosen pride,  
The darling blossom of her summer-tide,  
Crowned with the stainless honour of the prime,  
The fiery valour of the olden time.  
Were Fate's words cancelled, Rome again should hear  
The godlike conquests of Marcellus' spear ;  
Another sword should pierce the battle gloom,  
And smite her foes with overwhelming doom,  
As spring's sun drives the brood of winter to its  
tomb.  
Alas ! it may not be ; our hopes are vain ;  
Prayers cannot sunder Fate's coercing chain :  
Raise the sad wail, and shed the bitter tear,  
And scatter lilies o'er his spotless bier.  
Ah me ! Marcellus, were thy life unbound  
Remotest earth thy glories should resound."

Thus far the poet : and strong grief o'ercame  
The loving mother at her son's dear name ;  
Kind heaven, pitying her anguished moan,  
Sent o'er her spirit a forgetful swoon.

Mirthful again the waking breezes grew,  
Softly the stars were shining in the blue,  
Pure dew-drops sparkled on the buds and flowers,  
Cool fragrance floated through the leafy bowers,  
The mellow moon in silver-shining streams  
Poured forth the dazzling glory of her beams,  
And all the earth was fair as some bright land of dreams.







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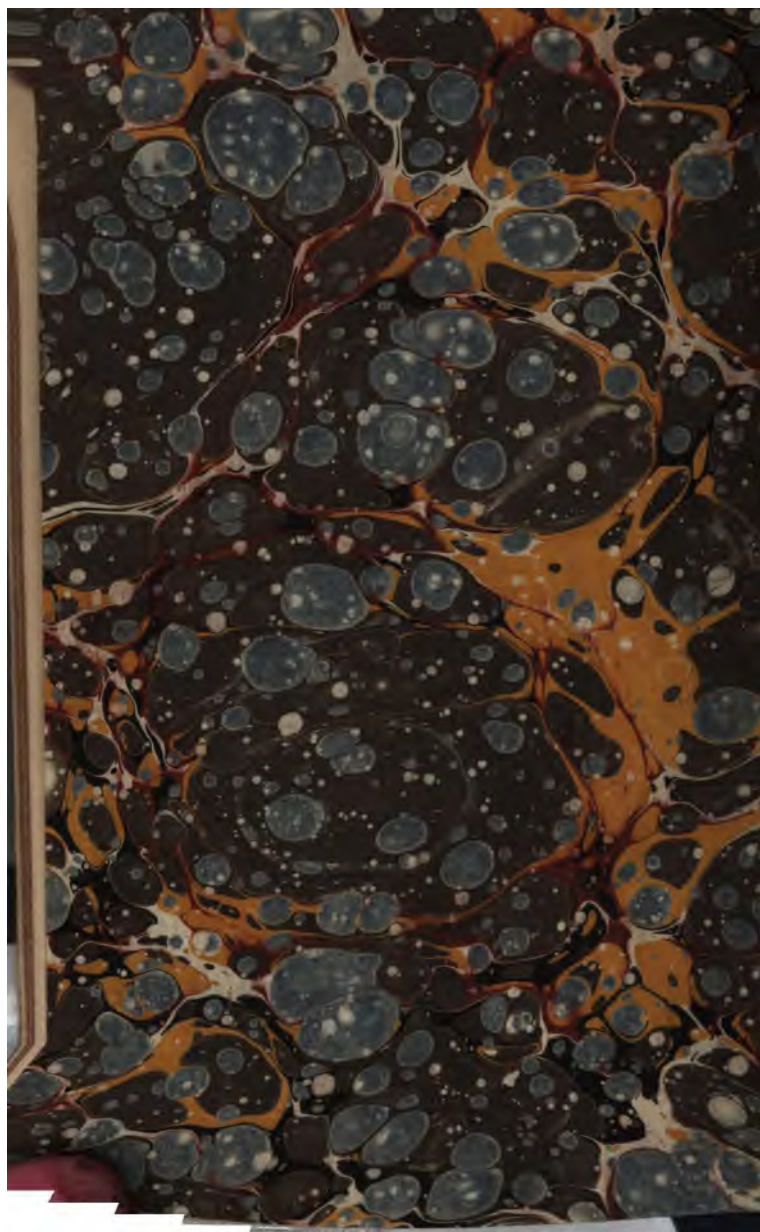
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